

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 NIC-01 OMB-01 ACDA-19

SAJ-01 EB-11 TRSE-00 FEA-02 COME-00 SAM-01 /170 W

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R 121209Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8292

INFO AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USINT ALGIERS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 09016

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD AND DAMASCUS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, US FR, XF

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SUBJECT: FRENCH VIEWS ON MIDDLE EAST AND EC-ARAB

RELATIONS

SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO QUAI OFFICIAL, FRENCH INTEND TO CONTINUE TO SEEK EC-ARAB COOPERATION AND FAIL TO COMPREHEND U.S. RESERVATIONS. THEY SHARE U.S. VIEWS ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR MIDDLE EAST DISENGAGEMENT AND PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WHICH MRS. MEIR'S RESIGNATION HAS NOT HELPED. END SUMMARY

1. DURING TOUR D'HORIZON WITH EMBOFF APRIL 11, QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR THE LEVANT ROUILLON PLACED GREAT EMPHASIS UPON THE FRENCH DESIRE TO MOVE FORWARD ON EC-ARAB COOPERATION. HE SAID HE HOPED THE MATTER WILL BE RAISED DURING THE NEXT EC FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE WHICH, HE SAID, MAY TAKE PLACE LATER THIS MONTH.

2. ROUILLON STATED THAT WITH THE BEST WILL IN THE WORLD, HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE U.S. BELIEVES THE EC INITIATIVE TOWARD THE ARABS WOULD HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON EITHER NEGOTIATIONS FOR A MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT OR THE ACTIVITIES INITIATED BY THE WASHINGTON ENERGY CONFERENCE. ON THE CONTRARY, SAID ROUILLON, A MEETING LATE THIS YEAR OR EARLY NEXT YEAR BETWEEN ARAB AND EUROPEAN MINISTERS SHOULD HAVE THE OPPOSITE EFFECT, A VIEW THAT HE SAID IS SHARED BY ALL THE EC-9. RATHER THAN GIVING THE ARAB EXTREMISTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPOSE THEIR VIEWS ON THE MODERATES, THE PROPOSED MEETING WITH THE EUROPEANS WOULD ALLOW THE ARAB MODERATES, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE EUROPEANS, TO STRENGTHEN THEIR OWN POSITIONS AS THEY HAD AT THE RECENT ARAB GATHERINGS IN ALGIERS AND TUNIS. ROUILLON SAID THAT DURING EC POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS ON RELATIONS WITH THE ARABS, NONE OF THE EC-9 HAD EVER BELIEVED THAT THERE WAS ANY POSSIBILITY OF THEIR EFFORTS' IMPINGING ON AMERICAN PEACE AND ENERGY INITIATIVES. MOREOVER, HE CONTINUED, ARAB MODERATES, INCLUDING EGYPT, HAVE OFFICIALLY DENIED TO THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT CERTAIN REPORTS (E.G. FROM WASHINGTON) THAT THEY ARE OPPOSED TO ARAB COOPERATION WITH EC WHICH, IN FACT, THEY WELCOME. HE HOPED THAT BY A CONTINUING EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE EC-9 A BETTER

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COMPREHENSION OF AMERICAN RESERVATIONS COULD BE OBTAINED. HE HIMSELF WAS PERSUADED THAT ONCE THE U.S. FULLY UNDERSTOOD EUROPEAN CONCERNS AND INTENTIONS THERE WOULD BE NO REASON FURTHER TO DELAY EUROPEAN INITIATIVES WITH THE ARABS.

3. READING FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON DESCRIBING A CONVERSATION ON APRIL 9 OR 10

BETWEEN FRENCH MINISTER DE LA GORCE AND DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON, ROUILLON INDICATED THAT THE FRENCH SHARE ALMOST COMPLETELY THE VIEW OF THE STATE OF ISRAELI-ARAB RELATIONS EXPRESSED BY MR. ATHERTON. ROUILLON FELT, HOWEVER, THAT THE INCREASED ISRAELI POLITICAL INSTABILITY RESULTING FROM PRIME MINISTER MEIR'S SUBSEQUENT RESIGNATION MAKES IT UNLIKELY THAT EARLY PROGRESS ON DISENGAGEMENT OR IN THE GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE MADE AND THAT, IN CONSEQUENCE, THE 50/50 CHANCE FOR A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME HAD PROBABLY BEEN REDUCED. MUCH WOULD DEPEND ON THE CHARACTER OF THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT NEW ELECTIONS MIGHT PRODUCE, HE ADDED.

4. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT FRENCH REACTION TO THE RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL OF ARAB REPRESENTATION AT THE POMPIDOU FUNERAL, ROUILLON SAID ALL ABSENCES OF NEAR

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EASTERN CHIEFS OF STATE WERE UNDERSTANDABLE TO THE FRENCH EXCEPT FOR 3 COUNTRIES: LEBANON, SAUDI ARABIA AND ISRAEL. HE FOUND NO EXPLANATION FOR PRESIDENT FRANJIYAH'S ABSENCE. AS FOR SAUDI ARABIA, THE FRENCH ARE NOT CONVINCED BY THE ARGUMENT THAT WAHABITE BELIEF PROHIBITS ATTENDANCE AT SUCH CEREMONIES. GIVEN THE "IMPROVED" STATE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN FRANCE AND ISRAEL SINCE DE GAULLE'S TIME (SIC), THE FRENCH WERE ALSO SURPRISED THAT AN ISRAELI DELEGATION OF AT LEAST AS HIGH A LEVEL AS THE ONE SENT TO THE GENERAL'S FUNERAL HAD NOT BEEN NAMED FOR THE POMPIDOU SERVICE.

5. COMMENTING ON THE RECENT US-SAUDI COOPERATION AGREEMENT, ROUILLON REPEATED THE VIEW EXPRESSED IN PARIS 8688 THAT FRENCH AGREEMENTS WITH ARAB STATES ARE VERY SIMILAR TO OURS WITH SAUDI ARABIA, IMPLYING THAT THE U.S. SHOULD NO LONGER HAVE OBJECTIONS TO RECENT FRANCO-ARAB ACCORDS.

COMMENT: ROUILLON'S REMARKS ON EC-ARAB COOPERATION MAY INDICATE A SLIGHTLY INCREASED FRENCH WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH US, AN EVOLUTION WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE. THEY UNDERLINE, HOWEVER THE QUAI'S INTENTION TO URGE THE EC TO FOCUS ON THE SUBJECT DESPITE ANY U.S. RESERVATIONS AND THE INTERIM NATURE OF THE PRESENT FRENCH GOVERNMENT.
IRWIN

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